



CM Pool Budget Amendment #2

Co-Sponsors: Council Members Alter, Casar, Kitchen

Building Capacity with EMS Community Health Paramedics

SD23: Health & Environment, Safety

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Emergency Medical Services, with the nearly 500 first responders serving our population valiantly throughout the COVID-19 crisis, has far exceeded their capacity. To help meet the need for a more appropriate health and social service response to people experiencing homelessness, seven (7) new Community Health Paramedic positions are needed for EMS.

These CHP positions will help us meet the community's desire to treat response calls related to people experiencing homelessness and calls with a mental health or substance abuse component as a health care issue rather than as a law enforcement issue. Additional CHPs will ensure that emergency response calls with these components can be diverted to trained professionals.

Adding 7 CHPs to the Community Health Paramedics Program to assist with response capacity aligns with the City's growing Mental Health Diversion Program which is being scaled up in FY21 to respond with mental health professionals to emergency calls for people experiencing homelessness.

Community Health Paramedics Program

- The Austin EMS Association is calling for these additional 7 Community Health Paramedic FTEs to respond to dispatch calls for people experiencing homelessness and to support clinicians in responding to calls for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.¹
- The goal of CHP medics within EMS is to address non-emergent needs for individuals that call 911 because they have no other place to turn for medical care. CHPs partner with clinics, hospitals and other resources to develop ways to prevent hospital readmissions and ensure the patient is receiving the most appropriate care.
- The overall goal of the CHP program is to connect the individual to education and resources needed to prevent emergency rooms from being a primary care provider and reduce admissions. CHPs, along with services such as Community Care, Integral Care, Central Health and many other organizations, work collaboratively to remove barriers to health care.
- This investment and shift in emergency 911 response from purely law enforcement to trained health care professionals is essential as the City works to ensure emergency calls are responded to by the appropriate personnel.

Table 1. Additional EMS FTEs

Community Health Paramedics	FY21 Funding
7	\$691,490
Total	\$691,490

Source: Austin EMS Association

¹ Austin EMS Association